

TAILS IN THE BOARDROOM

CANINE LESSONS FOR BUSINESS TEAMS

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Biography:

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Abstract:

Dogs know the secrets to productivity and harmony within their packs; humans are often blind to these simple truths. Pack theory and canine behaviorism can be successfully applied to manage and improve human relationships. This study is an examination of how common canine behaviors within packs (e.g., conflict management, leadership, and communication) are equally effective when employed by members of business teams. Canine and human examples from current literature and observation illustrate the potential for improving efficiency, productivity, and collaboration among teams without raising hackles.

INTRODUCTION

Dogs know the secrets to productivity and harmony within their packs; humans are often blind to these simple truths. Pack theory and canine behaviorism can be successfully applied to manage and improve human relationships. This study is an examination of how common canine behaviors within packs of conflict management, leadership, and communication are equally effective when employed by members of business teams. Canine and human examples from current literature and observation illustrate the potential for improving efficiency, productivity, and collaboration among teams without raising hackles.

Most wild dogs live in social groups comprised of several families called clans. The social hierarchy is based on the alpha pair, who provide leadership for the group and hold the highest social status.

Within each clan may be one or more packs, which are usually groups of five to seven dogs who hunt together. While the primary relationship between pack members is functional (i.e., to hunt and kill prey for the clan), they enhance their relationships with play. Through play wild dogs and wolves learn about their packmates as they mimic the behavioral sequence that occurs during a hunt. This experience increases the bond between pack members and enables them to better predict each other's behavior, an essential skill when coordinating efforts to take down big prey with other dogs who may be out of sight. As Rogers and Kaplan (2003) proposed, this ability to confidently predict behavior may be a requirement for pack members before setting out together on a hunt.

Canine groups have strict rules of communication that reflect their social hierarchy and each member is responsible for obeying and reinforcing the rules at all times. This constant application creates a highly cohesive group. There are no occasions when pack members can walk past another without some form of interaction, whether it is a full investigation or a casual greeting. Wild dogs work diligently on their relationships and on maintaining the cohesion of the group. It is not surprising that long-lasting groups such as those of wolves invest considerable time in group etiquette.

Dogs and wolves have strong instincts for conflict solving, communication, and cooperation and are therefore convenient models of the same behaviors for work teams.

Table 1 - Canine Principles Applied to Work Teams

	CANINE PRINCIPLE	HUMAN EXAMPLE
Communication	Master body language	Pay attention to signals beyond words when others speak
	Give undivided attention	Respect the other party enough to <i>really</i> listen when asked
	Offer and receive honest feedback	Provide feedback to help others progress and graciously and professionally accept the same
	Define boundaries	Establish and explain the policies and procedures that govern the work
Leadership	Focus on progress, not form	Be willing to accept progress even if it isn't picture perfect
	Capitalize on natural talent	Recognize that individuals have unique talents and skills and put those to work
	Enforce rules	Impose consequences fairly and as necessary to protect the agreed upon boundaries and build trust
	Demonstrate commitment	Live the policy statement
	Share knowledge	Tear down business silos and share information to increase the strength of the team
Conflict Management	Apologize well	Sincerely and willingly admit fault
	Practice forgiveness	Support those who make the effort to apologize by accepting the apology and move forward
	Bite as a last resort	Respond to threats calmly, methodically, and rationally – the consequence must be appropriate to the action
	Use calming signals	Understand and recognize distress, frustration, and anger in others and work towards appeasement before negotiating the situation
	Part with emotion	Realize that emotion and logic aren't the best combination and rely more on reason when making business decisions

COMMUNICATION

Master the Art of Body Language

Dogs rely on body language, vocalization, and odor to communicate messages to other dogs. This vocabulary is universally understood by both domestic and wild dogs across the globe. Humans are not equipped to send detailed messages via scent, but we can, and do, readily communicate with one another without saying a word. Young (2007) referred to this communication as “micromessaging.” Micromessages are nuanced behaviors people blindly use and react to in dealings with others. Dogs are masters at micromessaging and most canine behaviorists attribute the dog’s success in cohabiting with humans to his careful and continuous study of human body language.

The dhole is an African wild dog known as the “whistling hunter.” They typically hunt prey in the bush and cannot see other pack members, so they have a network of whistles they use to communicate with each other while surrounding their prey and coordinating the strike (Alderton, 1998). Wolves, who hunt large prey in packs, have well developed, long tails in comparison to other wild dogs. These tails enable wolves to turn rapidly at high speeds but also help to signal to other pack members during the hunt (Rogers and Kaplan, 2003).

Albert Mehrabian began experimenting with what he termed “silent messages” in the 1970s and discovered that although consciously unaware of the signals, people were able to make accurate inferences about a person’s feelings based on physical cues. Mehrabian’s (1971) studies evidenced that human communication about personal feelings and attitudes consists of messages from three sources, known as the 3 Vs (verbal, vocal, and visual). Of the three sources, body language is the most powerful communicator (55%), followed by tone of voice (38%) and the message itself (7%). The words people speak, therefore, have the least effect on an audience – people rely on how the message is delivered more than the content of the message to understand what is meant.

To hunt together in a pack, each dog must be comfortable with the others and able to accurately predict their behavior. They accomplish this by bonding outside of their functional relationships through play. When coworkers establish a close relationship, they come to understand each other’s micromessages better than other peers due in part to the amount of exposure gained through time, but also because they are sincerely interested in the emotional state of the other – they become “tuned in.” (Young, 2007)

Give Undivided Attention

Domestic dogs are terrific listeners in spite of the fact they are not native speakers of the human tongue. A dog who is listening will offer every ounce of focus he can muster, at least until he spots a squirrel. If he is especially interested, he will tilt his head to one side. Whether he understands the message is another matter, but we can be certain that our best friends will happily set aside their priorities to be present and listen without judging.

Nodding, eye contact (without staring), leaning forward, and slightly tilting the head are all signals to the speaker that what he is saying is being heard and processed (Pease & Pease, 2004). None of these signals is effective, however, if the speaker is interrupted – allow him time to finish his thoughts before contributing. Effective groups allow each member dedicated time to speak.

Give and Receive Honest Feedback

Dogs, both domestic and wild, accept criticism as a tool for improvement. If a wolf does not engage in the customary greeting rituals when a pack member passes, she will be immediately corrected for the transgression. Likewise, if she witnesses behavior that violates the pack’s rules, she is expected to provide feedback to the offending party (Steinhart, 1995). This constant exchange of feedback allows for members to freely communicate to each other regarding how well expectations are met without inciting violence. The pack relies on this kind of communication to maintain cooperation, which ultimately defines its health and longevity.

The ground rules for a forming group should include the commitments to give and receive feedback. Members who do not live up to the group's expectations will be confronted and it is the responsibility of each individual to see that undesirable behavior is immediately addressed. This approach depends on trust in and respect for fellow group members. To let small problems fester is to drive a wedge in the productivity and cooperation of a group.

Define Boundaries

Odor defines canine boundaries, which dogs indicate through "marking territory" with feces, urine, or paw scratches. The scent glands on each paw pad and below the tail ensure each dog has a distinct calling card. These odiferous boundaries politely communicate to other clans of dogs that "this space is taken" and consequences are readily dealt to those who choose to encroach (Rogers & Kaplan, 2003).

Office doors and cubical walls serve a similar purpose in the business environment. Employees are most comfortable in an environment where they have some claim to physical space (Evans, Johansson, & Carrere, 1994). People also wish to protect their emotional space, that is, they want others to respect their personal boundaries regarding what they define as offensive. These boundaries provide a safe haven, whether the threat is physical or emotional. It is necessary to define expectations, or boundaries, when working with others so all parties understand where they can tread without raising hackles.

LEADERSHIP

Concentrate on Progress, Not Form

A dog who recognizes the smell of bacon left unattended on the kitchen counter has one goal: eat the bacon. If reaching the bacon requires breaking several dishes, bloodying a paw on the rubble, and stepping on the cat for extra height, so be it. The important thing for her is to achieve the goal, regardless of how the bacon gets in her tummy. It's hard to fight instinct.

A leader who demands style in addition to success may reduce the group's ability to achieve by limiting their options for action. Had the bacon-stealing dog been concerned with minimizing the damage to the other items on the counter, she may have missed her opportunity for bacon because it would have taken her longer to focus on her form. When solving problems or planning to achieve goals, employees need a bit of freedom to comfortably consider all options. Imposing a requirement of method, while sometimes necessary, may constrict the group's ability to deliver. Additionally, if a group exceeds their defined goals but are chastised for how they got there, they will be less motivated to achieve the target and more motivated to look good while falling short of the goal.

Capitalize on Natural Talent

The biggest and strongest dog is not necessarily the one who leads the hunt. Dogs in alpha positions are not only physically capable but (at the risk of anthropomorphizing) have qualities people associate with ideal, natural leaders. As Meech suggested (Steinhart, 2005), alpha wolves are those who are best able to bring harmony to the pack, not those who are the meanest and most aggressive. The natural leader assumes responsibility for the pack and the remaining pack members accept responsibilities in their areas of strength. The fastest runners serve as the perimeter for encircled prey; the strongest take turns inflicting wounds.

Responsibilities within a group should go to those who can most readily perform them. Taking a talent inventory during the forming stage or at the onset of a new group project allows the group to capitalize on the talents its individual members possess that might otherwise go unnoticed. Not only will the group learn more about its members, but the inventory will help place assignments in the right hands. To ask the linear thinking accountant to design eye-catching flyers for the upcoming holiday party is to invite frustration – she will be frustrated with her lack of ideas and the group will be disappointed with her output. The lively office manager who eagerly decorates for holidays and birthdays will likely plow through the flyer design with ease. The accountant may be better employed creating a database of the employees and spouses who plan to attend, along with their dinner choices. Recognize the talents within the group and make use of them.

Enforce the Rules

The leader of any group must provide the behavioral example to be followed, and dog groups are no exception to this rule. The alpha pair are responsible not only for demonstrating appropriate behavior, but also for being the primary enforcers of the pack rules. As mentioned in *Give and Receive Honest Feedback*, however, each member carries the responsibility of enforcing the rules, regardless of station.

Group leaders must accept the responsibility of being the model of a contributing, effective member, and with that comes the unpopular position of policing behavior. In a well-formed group that has set clear expectations and ground rules, this effort should be minimal, especially if teammates subscribed to the commitment to provide and receive honest feedback. Other standard ground rules include bans on hogging (talking too much), bogging (discussing an issue that's already been addressed), fogging (avoiding, ignoring, ambiguity, or defensiveness), frogging (hopping between subjects without finishing), flogging (personal attacks), and mad dogging (interrupting or otherwise preventing people from speaking) (Lynch & Werner, 1992).

Demonstrate Commitment to the Cause

Wild dogs depend on their social groups for food, protection, shelter, socialization, and help in caring for young and old family members. Wolves reaffirm their commitment to the clan each time they engage in social behavior – it is required that all members routinely evidence their commitment to the group and its members through adherence to the rules. Each member is committed to the cause because the cause is survival; without this commitment the relationships within the group would eventually deteriorate, leaving each dog to himself.

Forming a committee is hardly a matter of life and death but requires the same care and commitment from its members in order to be successful. The members need to understand why they were brought together and what they need to accomplish. A team charter can help to define the group's mission, products and/or services, and essential processes. The group's leader must see that every member of the team understands the purpose and direction of the group.

Share Knowledge

In order to ensure long-term stability and survival of the pack, wild dogs act on succession plans. Puppies are reared with the utmost patience and are allowed ample opportunity to make

mistakes. They have the benefit of mentoring from the elders and ready access to the pack's leaders. When they are ready to apply their knowledge they participate in their first hunt. Those who have knowledge share it freely with those who are learning.

When silo keepers participate in group work, they are reluctant to impart information specific to their work areas. This silent barrier naturally impedes the progress of the group because not only are the members operating at different levels of knowledge, but the persistent silos are at odds with the team effort. Leaders who freely share knowledge set the example and expectation that others within the group must do the same, whether through incorporating best practices or communicating relevant data.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Learn to Apologize

The canine language of appeasement and supplication is extensive. A dog who makes a mistake may avoid eye contact, flatten her ears, flick her tongue, lower her head, or lie down. These behaviors seek to make her visually smaller and puppy-like so she can communicate that she understands her error and has no intention of causing additional trouble (Aloff, 2005). If she did not offer these behaviors she would be immediately corrected in a manner appropriate to the severity of the situation. When the apology is complete, the dogs carry on normal activity.

Humans, especially those in leadership positions, often resist apologies because they feel they need to maintain a strong presence by denying fault (Dimitrius & Mazarella, 1998). Unfortunately this refusal to admit wrongdoing serves to weaken their image in the eyes of others. *The One Minute Apology* by Kenneth Blanchard offers several compelling reasons to apologize and outlines a simple program for making amends while building integrity. The ability to acknowledge mistakes, especially those that affect others, is an essential component of teamwork.

Practice Forgiveness

If a group is going to thrive in the long-term, for every apology there must be forgiveness. When a dog offers an apology to another dog, they exchange signals that indicate the message was received, understood, and accepted in the form of posture and lack of eye contact (Aloff, 2005). The incident is not necessarily forgotten but is certainly forgiven, allowing both to move forward without a second thought. As with apologies, the failure to forgive in a pack conflicts with the rule of harmony and will be corrected appropriately.

Forgiveness is tied to *Live in the Present* – in order to forgive and put the past behind it is necessary to live in the present. Team members who get hung up on who botched the lunch order first need to reevaluate the priorities of the group (it's likely that lunch will not be high on the list) and then commit to achieving the group's defined goals. Group in-fighting depletes the amount of time and energy directed toward productivity. When an apology is offered, it must be accepted in good faith and forgiven for the health of the group.

Bite Only as a Last Resort

When a dog is irritated with another dog's behavior and asks for it to cease, he will first snarl, lifting his lip to expose a few teeth. The other dog continues to invade his space, so the

frustrated dog escalates his warning with a wider snarl and begins growling. The inconsiderate dog still does not acknowledge the message, leaving the warning bite as the last defense. The defensive dog bites in the direction of the aggressor and may make contact, which communicates the threat that will be realized without retreat. Should the other dog continue to encroach on the first dog's boundaries, a physical fight will ensue. Fights are typically bloodless but may become more serious if the issue is especially sensitive (e.g., a mother protecting her puppies from a canine predator is more likely to inflict and suffer injury than an older dog guarding his bed from a pushy youngster). Considering that the canine mouth is built to break bones and tear flesh, bloodless encounters are a remarkable demonstration of restraint.

Groups where members are at odds with each other are prone to ardent disagreements over small details. A heated argument about using Arial versus Times New Roman in the group charter is unnecessary biting and should be downgraded to a small snarl – the disagreement does not advance the goals of the group and should be treated with attention relative to its importance. Appointing a peacekeeper for group interactions can help teammates identify when the snarl-growl-bite sequence happens too quickly and redirect the focus to productivity.

It is important to consider the perceived consequences of escalated warnings. If a group member repeatedly snarls at a recurrent problem and fails to escalate to a growl, his snarls will become meaningless and his coworkers will take advantage of his unwillingness to enforce his boundaries. In order for people to respect the sequence of escalation, there must be an eventual consequence if the problem persists. This practice may be difficult for exceptionally shy group members and teammates should abide by their commitment to enforce the rules to assist the shy person in defending his boundaries, if necessary.

Use Calming Signals

Calming signals are the canine toolbox for avoiding and resolving conflict. Rugaas (2006) illustrated and explained about 30 known calming signals, such as sitting down, freezing, yawning, head turning, and tail wagging. Offering one or a cluster of these behaviors is the direct and polite way for a dog to express her uncertainty, discomfort, or nervousness or to reassure a dog who may be feeling uneasy in her presence. These signals are subtle but well understood and are usually mirrored to show that the message was received.

Appeasement behaviors in humans are similar to canine calming signals and include widening eyes, exposing palms, and moving slowly (Pease and Pease, 2004). Widening the eyes to expose the whites makes the eyes appear larger and more infantile, which elicits caring behavior. Showing the palms of the hands and moving slowly demonstrate to the opposition that the hands are free of weapons and there is no intention to sneak a physical attack, both measures that were important signals when people dressed to anticipate combat at a moment's notice. When a coworker is on his way through the snarl-growl-bite sequence, trying experimenting with calming signals to mitigate the threat he feels. Sit down, speak in a level tone, and use small gestures (like open palms) when speaking. As the aggressor relaxes and feels less physically intimidated, he will calm himself.

Part with Emotion

By and large, dogs get along with one another. When a socially ignorant dog takes liberties with a “get to know you” sniff or approaches directly rather than curving his path slightly, he is briefly corrected, apologizes, and is granted the opportunity to start with a clean slate. This ritual occurs matter-of-factly and mature dogs are able to completely avoid or quickly resolve conflict without escalation. Each follows the unwritten rules of canine etiquette and is not emotionally tied to the situation by fear or anxiety because of his confidence in the system of communication. Parting with emotion is closely tied to *Learn to Apologize* and *Practice Forgiveness* – apologizing and forgiving are much easier if emotion can become secondary to reason.

Histrionics in the office are distracting, unproductive, and the hallmark of attention-seekers. When dogs seek to eliminate unwanted behavior that does not directly violate a dog rule (and hence warrant a correction), they ignore the behavior (Pryor, 1999). Puppies that repeatedly jump and climb on an older dog to incite play will eventually give up and move on when they realize they are not getting the desired reaction. This technique is quite effective in extinguishing behavior, but in the case of a group meeting, a respectful correction may be required when the antics violate a ground rule or otherwise interfere with the group’s progress. To maximize the value of the correction, it is important that it be appropriate to the offense and not emotionally charged.

WORK LIKE A DOG

Celebrate

The rapidly wiggling, wagging, licking, and barking frenzy that greets weary workers at the end of a day is an elaborate greeting that celebrates the return of a pack member to the pack. The length of the departure does not matter to the dog, who celebrates the return after a three-minute absence with the same fervor as a three-week absence. As far as the dog is concerned, the celebration is the same.

In recent years an email forward has made the rounds through cyberspace that describes a day in the life of an average dog: “Breakfast! Oh boy! My favorite thing! A walk! Goody! My favorite thing! Time for a nap! My favorite thing!” Not only do dogs celebrate the events in their lives, however small, they do not skimp on joy. A puppy who masters a command in her first obedience class wiggles in celebration when her person coos “Good girl!”; she does not postpone her joy until she passes the end-of-class evaluation.

A project manager whose team has just completed the first of four phases of a software implementation may postpone his joy and celebration to avoid later disappointment or jinxing the project. He and his team therefore miss a valuable opportunity to celebrate their success and build the motivation and momentum to achieve the targets for the remaining three phases of implementation.

Live in the Present

If the bacon-snatching dog from *Concentrate on Progress, Not Form* is scolded for her crime, she will apologize and attempt to appease. It is impossible to say with certainty, but she will probably not dwell on the incident. While dogs do have memory of the past and the ability to

anticipate the future, they appear to leave the past behind them and plan to deal with tomorrow when tomorrow comes.

In business it is necessary to take into account past events as well as make plans for the future, and within a group this happens multiply because of the varied experience and perspectives each member brings to the process. With so many considerations it is easy to become distracted by last week or next year, but now is the time when the work gets done. Getting stuck in “we’ve always done it that way” or procrastinating a vital action item until the next progress meeting stand in the way of progress. Today is for making history, not reliving it, and if it is worth doing, it is worth doing today.

Recognize that Even Buttholes Have Good Information

As mentioned in *Define Boundaries*, dogs use anal scent glands to communicate messages to other dogs. Upon meeting new dogs or reuniting with old friends, dogs slowly circle each other and sniff under the tails. This canine handshake and small talk exchanges information about age, sex, and health, and for familiar dogs serves as verification of identity. Sniffing is the socially acceptable, polite way to greet another dog. An approaching dog has a social responsibility to acknowledge and greet each dog he comes across and learns things not obvious from appearances. Because dogs rely so heavily on their olfactory sense for gathering information, this nosey practice typically extends to other species, including people (crotch-sniffing) and cats (butt-sniffing). They seek valuable information and do not appear to be picky about the source.

The butt-sniffing behavioral sequence serves as a lesson (not a literal one, of course) to avoid judgment before reviewing the facts but also that unexpected sources can provide useful information. Dogs are constantly receptive to information acquired through sniffing and treat new situations as opportunities to learn. Members of a team may make unfounded judgments about one another based on office gossip or general appearance and effectively close themselves off from learning from each other. Everyone has unique experiences and recognizing the worth those differences can increase the collective wisdom of the group. Teammates need to be open to the potential of each member to contribute to the team’s success rather than automatically discounting those who do not appear to fit in.

Ask for Help

Requests for help from dogs are most often observed in the canine-human relationship, presumably because people have opposable thumbs. The “help me” gaze happens frequently when a favorite toy rolls beneath the sofa, just out of paw’s reach. After staring at the toy, attempting to cram her nose under the sofa, frantically checking other sides of the sofa to see if the toy has appeared elsewhere, and returning to crouch in front of the sofa to make sure the toy hasn’t moved, the dog will put on her best wide eyes and perhaps whimper a bit while she lifts a paw. This cluster of behaviors is a clear cry for help and she does her best to appear puppyish to incite caring behavior from another (human) pack member. In this case the caring behavior is retrieval of the slobbery, squeaky fleece toy, which is received with celebration and great appreciation. The dog was quick to recognize her limitation in this situation and asked for assistance, which she rewarded with sincere gratitude. It does not appear that dogs keep track of who owes whom a favor or the number of times a fellow canine asks for a helping paw.

In stark contrast, people are reluctant to admit they need help, even when it is painfully obvious, to avoid earning a reputation as incompetent or weak. Employees tend to keep score of how often others ask for a hand in completing tasks. They expect eventual reciprocity for services rendered and keep a mental tally of “help debts” owed to them. These grudging behaviors virtually eliminate altruism and divide groups by compromising trust and respect. Team members are individuals and will therefore have different skills and challenges; as a team the other members should eagerly provide support without judgment for those who need it for the benefit of the team. Moreover, those who ask for help must also express their appreciation.

Learn About Teammates

The role of play in developing and maintaining relationships between packmates is integral in the pack’s functional success (i.e., their ability to hunt large prey). All dogs mimic hunting through play, from the great Dane who springs from side to side to disorient imaginary wild boars to the Papillion who pounces on substitute mice. In the canine world play provides the practice necessary to improve productivity and efficiency in work, and much of this is done through teamwork. As mentioned in the introduction, dogs play together in part to learn about each other’s reactions to different situations. Play increases the bond between pack members and tighter bonds decrease dysfunction within the group (Rogers & Kaplan, 2003).

Starting meetings with a short play period may help the group develop an identity and build trust and respect for each other. Members can share stories about their hobbies or the group can participate in brief team building games. The camaraderie that comes with recognizing teammates as distinct individuals will provide greater cohesion within the group as well as the opportunity to have a bit of fun.

Shake Off Stress

Canines have the innate ability to recognize when the stress becomes too much for them and they then take the time to shake it off. They stop what they are doing and physically shake off their stress from head to tail (Scholz & von Reinhardt, 2007). This motion provides a physical break as well as a mental one – it signals to other dogs that “I’ve recognized my limitations and understand I can’t do much else here. It’s time for me to move on.”

People are reluctant to signal their peers that they need to take a break – it’s commonly seen as a weakness and self-indulgent, especially in the midst of a looming deadline. Taking time to recover from stress is essential for continued productivity and health. Getting away from the desk for a brief walk, a crossword puzzle, or even staying in the office to stretch can significantly reduce stress and provide a boost of energy. There is no shame in recognizing limits, and groups who push themselves through manic four-hour planning sessions also need to schedule time to regularly shake off their stress.

CAVEATS

While dogs do have a knack for teamwork, they also exhibit behavior humans should avoid at all costs. When dogs enforce rules, for example, they provide verbal (growling and barking) and physical (bristling and snarling) warnings before striking. The notion of defining boundaries and cautioning those who threaten to cross them is worthy of emulation, as is dealing consequences when the boundaries are disregarded. Strict adherence to the canine method in this instance,

however, may cause injury and lead to incarceration – a physical response to a team problem is simply not appropriate or acceptable.

A dog's livelihood, whether domestic or wild, depends on his ability to get along with others, which includes respecting authority, managing conflict, and communicating effectively. For animals that live in groups and rely on others for safety and productivity, these skills are essential and are selected for by breeding or nature. Although dogs naturally take to teamwork, their abilities to solve complex problems through logic and innovation are inferior to those of humans. As the more cognizant species, it is vital that the ideas presented in this paper be evaluated for fitness of use before application – while the teamwork principles discussed are neither new nor ingenious, they may not be appropriate in all situations.

CONCLUSION

The practice of cooperative and productive teamwork is essential in the business environment that makes use of cross functional teams, self-directed teams, and special project committees. While ample references and workshops exist for team building and group facilitation, their analytical presentation style may be difficult for team members to recall, especially when they need to apply the information.

Many of the reasons people include dogs in their lives are due to the behaviors and principles describe here. They listen raptly when we need to talk about the problems we encountered at work in spite of the fact they do not speak the language. They seek harmony in their relationships and are willing to leave the past in the past. They liberally provide feedback and clearly express their esteem (or lack thereof) of others.

Business people who have experience with canines can easily relate to the commonly used pack behaviors for communication, conflict management, and leadership. With slight modifications these behavior patters are transferable to work teams; the highly structured social lives of dogs serve as models of successful teamwork. While the value of timeless group theories, such as Tuckman's (1965) stages of group development, are irreplaceable, the average dog-friendly person may elicit more personal insight to group dynamics by asking "What would my dog do?"

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